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The Right to Freedom

The Bulletin of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna"



The Ashes of Chernobyl are Knocking at our Hearts...

It is the fourteenth post-Chernobyl year — and the twelfth "Chernobyl Way" demonstration. The traditional and immutable one. The authorities were afraid of it. They were afraid to permit it, at the same time didn't dare to forbid it. "Chernobyl Way" was finally permitted less than a day before it was to start. Before that (actually, in the very last hours), the citizens of Belarus were purposefully brainwashed with fear. The newspapers wrote about the new special means of physical and psychological impact on human beings, which allegedly were bought by the Belarusan punitive organs, with the aim to fight the participants of opposition demonstrations. Rumors were going around promoting fear of sound machines, tear-gas, portable "Cloud" machines with "Pink Fog" gas, and water-throwing machines, armored personnel carriers and tanks... On the day the demonstration was to take place, Minsk residents and the guests of the capital were asked not to come outside their homes, because of the thunder storm, which was allegedly expected (a reminder about the Niamiha tragedy).

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The pictures: "Chernobyl Way-2000".

Chronicle

On April 16 Vladimir Putin, the acting president of Russia, visited Minsk. During his visit Juras Sciepanisyn and Aleh Kazaryn were detained for walking on the streetway of Skaryna avenue (close to the Victory square, where Putin was) and shouting out "Putin, go home from our country" in English. The detained were taken to the police department, and released after 2.5 hours.

On April 21 the Minister of Internal Affairs Jury Sivakou resigned. Lukasenka accepted the resignation with the wording "on medical grounds". Michail Udovikau, who, according to rumors, was governing the crackdown of the meeting on March 25, was assigned to be the acting Minister of Internal Affairs.

A spontaneous meeting of workers of the building state trust company #8, department #33, took place in Brest *on April 21.* They are presently working on the construction of the Ice Palace in Brest. The builders demanded the duly payment of their wages.

On April 22, A. Lukasenka participated in the interactive TV-show "Minsk — Moscow". The conversation was about the creation of the new Union state of Belarus and Russia. A. Lukasenka answered the questions of the Russian "Nyezavisimaya Gazeta" newspaper, television and radio company "Mir" and the radio station "Mayak". A. Lukasenka harked back to the issue of creating the mighty military base, headed in the West direction. Lukasenka also talked about the internal political situation. He criticized Belarusan opposition for having only one goal: to make things seem as bad as possible..

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THE ASHES OF CHERNOBYL ARE KNOCKING AT OUR HEARTS...

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The schools and higher educational establishments tried to occupy their students as usual with extra-curricula activities in order to prevent them from going to the demonstration.

However, the "Chernobyl Way" took place with the largest number of participants gathering in many years – up to 50 thousand citizens.

The procession started from Jakub Kolas Square at 18.20. The participants, headed by the traditional Chernobyl Bell and the icon of Chernobyl Victims Mother of God, walked in the direction of Banhalor Square. One could hardly see the policemen (they were waiting for the demonstrators, sitting in the cars in residential areas close to Victory square and farther down the avenue near Independence square). One police car continuesly filming the demonstration ran about the column, which stretched for more than a kilometer. The people were not afraid of these tactics: they were neither howling the operator down, nor hiding their faces from him. That's how the fear comes to an end...

When the procession started, about 200 people (members of Conservative-Christian party BPF), who didn't agree with the permitted route of the procession, stayed on the square. The members of CCP (BPF) conducted a meeting of their own and announced a Minute of Silence. The observers of Belarusian and international human rights' organizations stayed on the square in order to observe the event's development. After the procession left the square (about 18.40), the participants of the "alternative" meeting were brutally attacked by the internal troops and Special Forces, dressed in black and wearing masks on their faces. A 17-year-old resident of Horki Andrej Anufryjeu was detained before the eyes of Georg Viek, OSCE mission representative and Barys Hiunter, observer of human rights' center "Viasna". According to the previous data of HRC "Viasna", about 20 people were detained, among those Alaksandar Atroscankau (under-age), Andrej Mytcyk (Casniki resident), Dzianis Jaromenka, Zmicier Zuraucyk and Andrej Sacuta (members of United Civic Party). Some of the detained people were severely beaten in the buses. All the detained were delivered to the Savecki DDIA of Minsk, where some of them were charged with administrative infringements.

At the time a meeting of tens of thousands of people was taking place on Banhalor square. The floor was taken by the leaders of the united opposition: Vincuk Viacorka (Belarusan Popular Front), Mikola Statkievic (Belarusan Social-Democratic Party "Narodnaja Hramada"), Anatol Labiedzka (United Civic Party), Paval Sieviaryniec ("Young Front"), as well as Piotr Kaznacejeu (the leader of Russian anti-fascist youth movement), Henadz Hrusavy (chairperson of the Board of the charity foundation "To the Children of Chernobyl"), Ivan Nikitcanka (the well-known scholar, researcher of the post-Chernobyl Belarus), the Czech senators Jan Ruml and Michal Zantouski, and others.



After the meeting was finished, the vans with sound amplifying equipment and posters were arrested. The vans, together with the people inside, were transported to the Saviecki DDIA. One of the vans was released immediately. The police made the people from the second van get off, making threats to confiscate either the van itself or the equipment, which was inside (it wasn't clear from their words). The people from that van, headed by Ales Kavalec (executive secretary of the Board of BPF "Adradzennie"), had to spend several hours in Saviecki DDIA without being charged. The representatives of BPF "Adradzennie", human rights defenders, and Christopher Paniko, a representative of OSCE mission in Belarus came to the DDIA in order to get the clarifications from the DDIA administration on why the people and equipment were being detained. At 23.30 the police authorities were forced to give a command to set all the detained people free and to return the van with the equipment to its owners.

According to the information of the regional representatives of human rights center "Viasna", the pickets, meetings and demonstrations, dedicated to the anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, took place in other Belarusan towns as well.

In **Horadnia** 2 pickets took place. About 10 persons participated in the first, and about 20 – in the second picket. Both pickets were permitted at an inconvenient time: from 7 to 8 p.m., but the organizers – Belarusan Popular Front and Young Front started the pickets an hour early. The participants held posters with the slogans, written on them: "Let's save Belarus from Chernobyl disaster, from Lukasenka's regime and from the Russian occupation". On demand of the policemen participants had to roll up the posters till 7 p.m. — the official time of the picket. The police filmed the picket and its participants.

In **Baranavicy** a picket, devoted to the anniversary of the disaster on Chernobyl nuclear station was organized by Belarusan Social Democrat Party "Narodnaja Hramada" and Baranavicy Ecological Union. The picket participants were spreading leaflets with the information about health care in the conditions of radioactive pollution. The poster "Chernobyl – 14 years of pain" was hanging in the main alley of the Central Park. The picket was observed by the representatives of Baranavicy City Executive Committee (CEC), police and KGB.

The meeting in **Svietlahorsk** was permitted in a very inconvenient and deserted place, but managed to gather about 100 people. Belarusan Popular Front applied to the CEC for the permission of the meeting. The deputy of the city physician-in-chief, concerned with the health condition of the city residents participated in the meeting and even took the floor to talk to his townsmen about the problem.

In **Recyca**, the meeting, permitted by the authorities, was conducted by Belarusan Popular Front and United Civic Party. The meeting was attentively observed by the local official press and television. Although nobody was detained, the organizers were threatened with fines.

In **Homiel** the local branch of BPF applied to the City Executive Committee to hold an action with up to 3 thousand participants. However, the day before the action, the representatives of BPF received a rejection. The reason was: applications for the actions with large number of participants are to be sent to the Regional Executive Committee. Nevertheless, the action took place. About 150 persons participated in "The Hour of Grief" in the center of Homiel. The policemen detained Jauhien Muraska and his wife, who had a poster in their hands.

The members of Conservative Christian Party BPF conducted an authorized picket on the Victory Square in **Vorsa**. About 20 persons took part in the picket.

In **Viciebsk**, a Minute of Silence was held near the monument to Eudakija Los. Later, from 6 to 8 p.m. an authorized meeting, organized by the Coordinate Council of Democratic Forces of Viciebsk, managed to gather over 300 participants.

In **Barysau**, despite the prohibition of the demonstration, a part of the participants (about 30 persons) gathered in front of the polytechnic. The people told to go back home or to the place of the authorized meeting. The meeting was rather calm. Ales Abramovic, the leader of the local branch of BSDP "Narodnaja Hramada", made an attempt to burn the portrait of Alaksandar Lukasenka. During the same evening Abramovic was arrested and sentenced 5 days of imprisonment.

In **Mahilou** the activities, devoted to the anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, began with laying wreathes to the Commemorative cross on the "Lausanauskija" cemetery. The activities continued in the catholic church of St. Stanislav and orthodox church of Three Saints, where the masses in commemoration of Chernobyl victims were held. The "Hour of Grief" became the culmination of the activities. The participants (about 200) stretched along the central city street Persamajskaja, holding the lighted candles in their hands. Anatol Fiodarau, the chairperson of the regional branch of Belarusan Popular Front "Adradzennie", was detained at

Valery SHCHUKIN
"A Citizen Is Able and Has to Advocate His or Her Rights..."

Journalist Valery Shchukin always has had his own special way. When 36 his colleagues were arrested in Minsk on March 25, the Freedom Day, he was not among them. On this day he was arrested ...in Viciebsk. We met Valery in the office of "Narodnaja Vola" newspaper. It was a little more than a week before the «Chernobyl Way" demonstration. During this week Valery had to stand three trials in Minsk and Viciebsk: an administrative case for the Freedom Day, a criminal case for "March of Freedom-1" and civil case of honor protection of the judge, offended by his newspaper article...

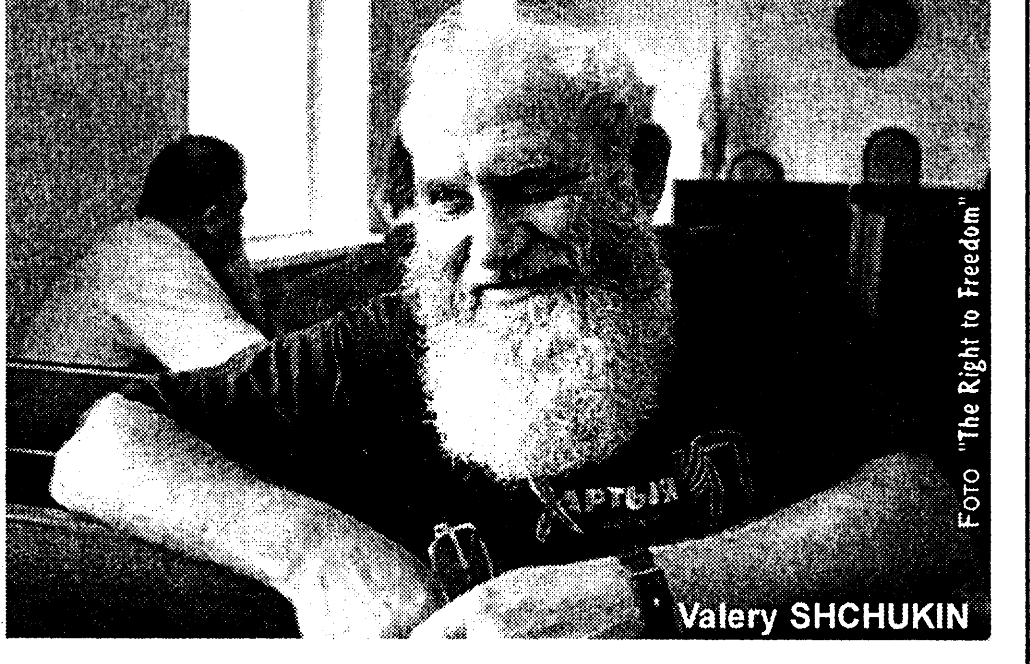


Foto "The Right to Freedom"

Valery SHCHUKIN

— Valery, under what circumstances did you appear behind the bars on the Freedom Day?

— Viciebsk policemen were executing the same order as the policemen in Minsk: not to let the demonstration to happen. They started grabbing people before the demonstration actually started. First they grabbed to people, but the third one – I – turned out to be a problem, because I demon-strated an active disobedience. It was as usual: they needed 6 persons in order to push me into the car, because 4 persons are not enough.

— Did the policemen know, who you were?

— They did. Moreover, I suppose that the question, if to detain me or not, was being decided in Minsk. Because the guy, who gave the order, held a mobile phone at his ear. He has quite a high post: he is the chief of Public Safety Department of Viciebsk region. He was in control of all detentions. I showed my journalist certificate, but they had a goal to grab me, and they did it. At that moment I was interviewing Uladzimir Plescanka, one of the BPF (Belarusan Popular Front) leaders in Viciebsk. The same as in Minsk, at first some people were detained, and later, the rest went on a demonstration. The only difference is the smaller scale of events in comparison with the capital.

— Why did you decide to go to Viciebsk on the Freedom Day?

— The editorial team decided a long time ago that our newspaper is a national edition, and we have to cover the events not only in the capital. As everybody knows, the Freedom Day was celebrated everywhere. I thought that there would be enough journalists to observe the events in Minsk.

— What happened after you were pushed into the car?

— We were taken to the District Department of Internal Affairs (DDIA). They started to draw up a protocol about "participation in the unauthorized demonstration and meeting", which started 10 minutes after we had been detained. I showed my journalist certificate again. Logically, they had to let me out and apologize. I am a journalist and I may be wherever, also on the unauthorized demonstration... But the deputy chief of the DDIA, who doesn't have any rights for that, arrested me for 2 days, sent me to the Viciebsk "Akrescina". Only Viciebsk establishment of such kind is located on Maskouski avenue...

— How do the conditions of the Viciebsk prison differ from the conditions of the Minsk one?

— In Viciebsk the people are kept like in Chechnya. The cells have no windows. Although, they are not in the basement, but on the second floor. I was there in three different cells. All of them were without windows. Finally I demanded a meeting with the chief of this prison. I told him: "You violate all the rules, that exist in our country. According to the norms, the cell lighting should be enough for reading, so that one does not have to strain his eyes". I demanded, that they follow all norms while I am kept here. Then they found a cell with a window for me.

— So, you mean, that there's no light in the cells with no windows even during the day?

— No, there is a light bulb... It is in a special recess in the wall, behind the bars. But what kind of lighting this is! The bulb is only 25 watts, not 150! You can see a person, but reading is impossible.

It all has started a bit earlier. We were 8 people in a cell, and during lunchtime, we were brought not normal spoons, but some "stumps". By the way, that doesn't happen any more in Minsk, they give normal spoons with handles, I made them do it. But in Viciebsk – they brought us stumps! Well, I let threw them all over the corridor. A policeman on duty came at once, took me to the corridor, placed me in front of the prison regulations: "Read!". Well, I read: "An arrested person must fulfil all the legal requirements of the prison administration". I say: "Do you consider eating with these stumps to be the legal requirement?" Eventually, we, three political prisoners, were taken to another cell and given normal spoons. And all the rest got the stumps!

— Who was in prison together with you?

— Plescanka and Salaujan. The three of us were detained by the Cyhunacny DDIA, and all the rest – by Kastrycnicki DDIA. The boarder of the district goes in the middle of the central street. We were detained on the territory of Cyhunacny district, but the demonstration was on the other side of the street. That's why the policemen were not grabbing more people. I guess, they expected that the demonstration will be on their side of the street. But the people crossed the street, and appeared to be on the territory of another DDIA! The demonstrators had managed to walk half a kilometer before the policemen from the appropriate district came.

— Is that true that you were convicted right in the police department?

— Of course. When the 2 days, which were "presented" to us by the DDIA deputy chief, passed, we were taken from the receiving prison to the DDIA. In about an hour they wanted to take us to the court building (the distance between them is about 200 meters). I asked if they have a document, allowing them to take me to court by enforcement. They told me that such document can be made only according to the decision of the court. And the judge can not make this decision just like that. First they have to issue a citation. And then, if I don't come, only then they may take me to court by enforcement.

I refused to go to the court without a notice. Then they called the judge to come to the DDIA. Of course, in our country the judges are subordinate to the police! Completely dependent! It's not the police that executes the court's directions, but the court, that does what the police tells it to do.

The notice was finally brought to me. I agreed that now I can come to court. They pinned my arms to my sides and dragged me down the corridor. The judge appeared in the room. I started demanding an open trial, because I could see from the window a lot of people outside, who want to be present during the trial. The police cordon didn't let them inside. I asked to let the people come in, but the judge refused. I demanded that my lawyer participate in the process. They brought a different person. I thanked him and refused. I have to pay for advocation. But I want to pay the lawyer, who is my legal representative! But they just bring nobody knows who, just to make me pay for the fact, that they brought somebody...

(to be continued on pages 4-5)

"A Citizen Is Able and Has to Advocate His or Her Rights..."

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In the administrative cases I have a right for a lawyer, but only if I specially demand him. The judge cannot provide me with a lawyer free of charge, because then they would have to provide him or her at the expense of the bar...

I said that I have witnesses that can say what I was doing. But they refused to invite them. So, they refused me in the open trial, in participation of the lawyer, and in examination of witnesses. There were other violations as well, but more peculiar ones.

— Were there the witnesses from the side of police?

- Certainly! Very interesting witnesses. One of them claimed that I swore in Belarusan, using foul language, shouting threats out. I say: But I am Russian-speaking! Even when I shout anything, I do it in Russian. Secondly, I never use foul language.

And when I was dragged to the car by hands and by legs, I had a pen in one hand, and a piece of paper in the other hand. But the witness says, that at the same time I managed to scratch, snap at the shoulder boards, tear the buttons off, etc. I suggested that they should conduct an investigative experiment: give me writing utensils, try to grab me and see, if I am able to scratch or do something else like that.

I was accused on the 2 articles: Article #167 – for participation in an unauthorized demonstration and meeting (but I state once again, they detained me before it started, theoretically I was not able to participate in it) and Article 166 for disobedience to police. And also, that I am one of the organizers. What organizer? "You were making the record". I was interviewing Plescanka, and they tell me: "You were staying there together with Plescanka and recording, who had come to the demonstration, and who had not!" How can one oppose such a "concrete" logic?!

I was detained with all the attributes of a journalist: 3 pens, dictaphone, an extra tape, 2 journalist ID cards... Everybody could see that I have all the journalist utensils! Article #166 is put in force only if I was disobedient to the *legal* police demand. But the demand of the police was not legal. The judge, in order to convict me, first had to hear the case of the Article #167. To establish the issue, if I was guilty or not. If I was, then they can punish me according to both articles. If I am not guilty, then the second article is automatically inoperative. But the judge doesn't understand that.

There is a concept of "presumption of innocence". But the judge presumes, that I am guilty. I disobeyed the police – that means I am guilty already. She only determined the measure of punishment, and she sentenced me to 5 days in prison.

Our legislation is different from American legislation. In America if there are 10 prosecutive articles, and you can be punished with 50 years on each – you receive 500 years of prison. They add up all the terms of imprisonment, one can get 5 life sentences. In our legislation all the terms are absorbed by the maximal one. If I was accused according to 2 articles, the same principle prevails. For example, if one article is "worth" of 10 days, and another one – of 15 days of punishment, the sentence should be 15 days...

But the judge allegedly doesn't know that. She judges me for disobedience, and then tries to judge me on the Article #167! If she will give me 10 more days of prison according to that article, I will have to spend this time in prison as well... I don't know where she got her degree and which laws she uses. These are not our laws! She has to consider both protocols at one time, as well as in the order I was talking about, not vice versa. But she divided them into different cases, and tried to judge me for the second time.

— How did that happen?

— At the end of the 10-day term, when I was preparing to come out, I was told: "Shchukin, come out with all your stuff!" – "Where to?" –"To the court", — "What court? I still have to be here for 3 hours". I didn't have a watch with me, but I knew the time from the shift-change of the guard. The shift changed at 9 a.m., and the conversation took place almost right after this.

The corridor guard comes – I didn't obey him, the duty officer comes – I tell him that I have to be here to the very end of the term. The prison chief comes – I tell him the same. Then 6 persons from the district department burst into the cell and, as I was lying there – barefooted, with no socks, partially dressed, they grabbed me hand and foot and dragged me to the courtroom.

When you are dragged, with your bare feet striking the stairs, and then, scraping against the asphalt, which is like emery paper — it's not a pleasant feeling, to be sincere. Of course, I had scratches all over. It's not that it was purposefully done, they just dragged me to the DDIA in such way. Just before this Nadzieja Dudarava, the representative of OSCE came to the DDIA, she was told that the trial would take place here. I demanded the court provision about taking me there by enforcement, or, if they don't have it – to give me a chance to walk to the court myself. So they called the judge to the DDIA again. And again they don't allow anybody inside. They let only 2 persons into the building: Dudarava, and a representative of Belarusan Helsinki Committee in Viciebsk. And also, only because of Dudarava, he wouldn't have managed to get inside. I was still barefooted: they dragged me here and dropped, so I was lying there, not even trying to stand up. "Drag me further!"- I say. But they didn't take the risk to drag me the last 10 meters in the presence of OSCE representative.

They talked with me for 2 hours, then finally they issued a citation. I asked them: "So, you let me go? That means, I am free, give me my things, and good bye". No, they don't let me out. I was saved only thanks to the intervention of Nadzieja Dudarava. I don't know, what she told the judge, but the judge made an agreement with me: I come to the court right away, and she will be loyal towards my demand to have a lawyer during the trial.

— But why did the second trial never take place?

— I came to the court building and was present in front of the judge as a partisan under interrogation: barefooted, dirty... I made the motions about the lawyer, examination of witnesses. And only now we appointed the particular day, when my case will be continued. I had to go to Minsk, raise some money, pay the costs of a lawyer. One cannot call the lawyer to the court at once, just phone him and say: "Could you please come?". He doesn't have the right to come until I have paid him.

Now you see, that only thanks to OSCE and Dudarava in particular I was released. Otherwise the judge could give me 10 more days of arrest. Only when I was released, and then came back with a lawyer, the trial was conducted under all regulations. The trial was open, anybody, who wanted, could come, there was a lawyer, as well as all the witnesses, who I made a motion about. The judge even put the gown on for such a case!

I think, I didn't spend 10 days in prison in vain. I am sure, such lawlessness will not happen again. By the way, I made an appeal prosecutor's office to bring criminal charges against the person, who gave the order to detain me (I repeat, it was illegal detention), and the person, who illegally arrested me. Let the prosecutor handle this. Taking into account the property damage, done to me: they tore my coat and suit apart, when trying to push me into the car. They didn't do it on purpose, but... It's all torn. I had to buy a new suit and a new coat. By the way, this is not the first coat, the first suit or the first shirt, torn apart under the same circumstances. I am not a millionaire! Every second detention ends up with the torn clothes. I think, I will demand the compensation of the damage...

— Valery, after the events of October 17, it was the police, who raised the claim against you. That you broke their sticks, tore their uniform.

Could you say, what was the continuation of those claims?

— The prosecutor sent me a written accusation, claiming that I stole and damaged the police property for the total value of 63 875 000 rubles (old money). What did I "steal and damage"? Police storm coats, martial cloaks, shields and helmets; I damaged a bus, 2 cars, 2 trucks...And so on. This case consists of 6 suits, they demand the compensation for total value of 15 thousand dollars. These are civil suits, just brought up by the city prosecutor Kupryjanau.

— This is the subject of the trial on April 24, isn't it?

— In general I am accused of the organization and personal participation in the well-known events of October 17, on the bridge across Svislac on Pulichava street. Although they don't have any evidence against me. No picture or film, showing me with or without a stone in my hands. Such pictures are theoretically impossible, because I wasn't present at that place in general. And about the accusations of organization... Yes, I applied for permission of "March of Freedom". But that does not mean the organization of a particular event. That's a completely different thing. I don't know, what they are going to judge me for. They have absolutely nothing against me! Besides, perhaps, that in the beginning I was walking in the very first row. I've been told that I had organized the demonstrators by my personal example: 20 thousand people were following me. Usually one gets a medal for such things!

I looked through all films: police and TV ones, I didn't find myself on Pulichava street. There are no witnesses that I was on that street. In general, if we talk about the riots, the people responsible are those, who organized them, and those, who were fighting. And those, who were just present at that place, are not to be responsible. But I was not even present there.

— What about the trial of April 26 – the suit of honor protection?

— I didn't have time to learn the case papers. The suit is filed by the judge of Partyzansky district court. She was offended by some newspaper article. I guess this is one of the articles about the contemptible conduct, the illegal punishment of workers from MAZ plant. Probably, she sued me for one of the articles I had written about that. I don't remember exactly, she wants a certain number of billions as a compensation for the moral damage...

— Do you regret that you went to Viciebsk on March 25?

- No. Vice versa, I think I did a good thing. I gave a needed lesson to the people in Viciebsk. They were really shocked and surprised that one can dictate his conditions so openly, that a citizen is able to advocate his rights...I showed them an example of how one can behave himself. The experience I have gained – I have to share it with others! I had experienced the things, I had to go through in Viciebsk, in Minsk back in 1997.

By Taciana SNITKO

Aliens In Their Own Country

The authorities banned the Festival of Chernobyl children.

Belarusian Charity Foundation "To the Children of Chernobyl", in cooperation with International Association Of Humanitarian Cooperation planned to conduct a contest-festival "The People of the World" from April 24 to 26.

12 youth centers, mainly from Belarusan regions, effected by the Chernobyl disaster, such as Bada-Kashalova, Malaryta, Babrujsk, Chachersk, Lelchycy, etc. were supposed to participate in the festival.

At the present moment up to 30 youth centers have been created in Belarus with support of BCF "To the Children of Chernobyl", IAHC and their partners from Germany, Canada, Norway and other countries, with no help from the state whatsoever. The centers were created in order to help young people to communicate with each other. The centers encourage youth participation in four kinds of activities: computer, language, Belarusan history courses as well as social work (help to the elderly people, who live in the region). In the first tour of the competition 12 of the existing centers proved the right to represent their respective regions on the festival. The young people had been preparing their festival performances for 9 months. During their performances the young people were supposed to present the traditions, customs, folk songs and dances of different countries of the world, which they visited. Each group of the performers was to present one of the countries: Germany, Switzerland, Ireland, Austria, the USA, Italy and others. Every performance showed the tight, warm and friendly relations between the people of Belarus and of the respective country.

The organizers planned to conduct the festival during the days of 14th anniversary of Chernobyl disaster in the Zdanivicy youth recovery center. On April 25 the participants and guests of the festival gathered on Independence square waiting for the bus to pick them up. Two more buses with participants were heading directly to Zdanovicy. Already on the Independence square, the organizers and participants learned the sad news. The day before, on April 24, the Security Council in a telephone conversation ordered to forbid the Festival. Leaders of the "To the Children of Chernobyl" Foundation appealed to the OSCE asking them to examine the situation. The Consultative-observing group of OSCE directed their observer Christopher Paniko, a citizen of the United States to Zdanovicy.

Having come to the youth recovery center, the participants didn't manage to find the center's director, who had promised the day before to be on his workplace no matter how the situation develops. The festival participants were met by the locked doors of the youth center. One of the center's employees was quick to answer the numerous questions of young people: "You are not allowed to be here, this is not a place for gatherings of BNF (Belarusan Popular Front) bastards", "Go away, I have just cleaned here. Don't you see, the center is under re-construction". The youth from Chernobyl regions were kicked out of the youth recovery center, which is meant for curing people from Chernobyl effected areas. The day before the center's director stated: "I am a soldier, I just carry out the order". A.V. Sharop, the representative of the Ministry of Education, who was also one of the festival jury members, the representative of OSCE, Mass Media and BELAPAN informational agency representatives, who planned to cover the festival events, as well as the foreign guests were observing the events. The rent, paid for the building, was about 1 trillion of Belarusian rubles, which is equal to $ 2000. The organizers of the festival understood straight away that nobody would return the money. The young people were shocked and very upset, not being able to perform.

However, the organizers of the Festival Henadz Hrushavy (the chair of the Board of "To the Children of Chernobyl" Foundation) and Iryna Hrushavaja (the leader of Association of Humanitarian Cooperation) did manage to keep their promise to the young people and to conduct the Festival. The Festival took place in a small club, belonging to the Shoes Factory, in the very center of the city. Every performance was very colorful, emotional and informative.

Unfortunately, the events in Zdanovicy youth center, once again proved the fact, that the interests of Chernobyl people are not just completely ignored by the state, but continue to be hurt by the merciless, cold and indifferent state machine.



Foto "The Right to"

Events Facts Comments

(continued from page 1)

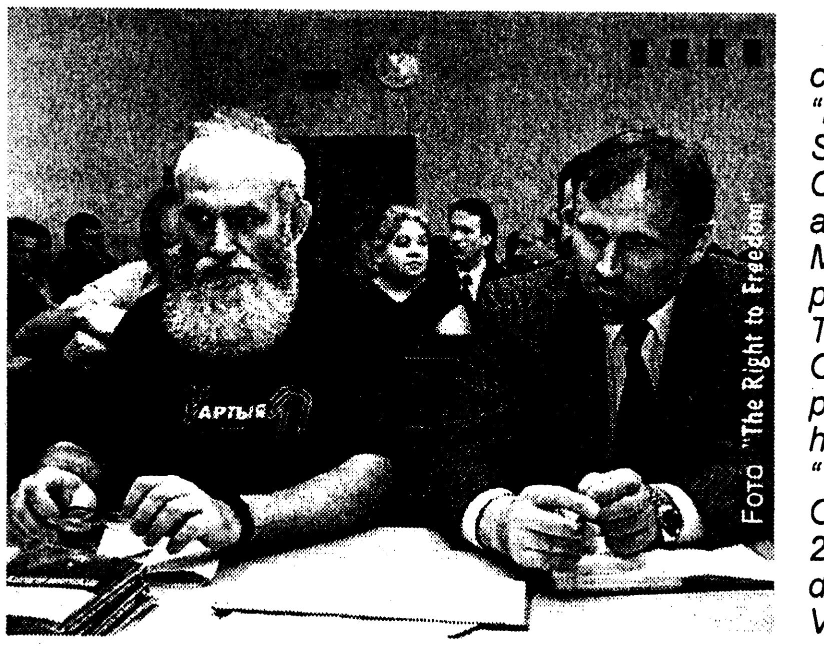
On April 21 a weekly newspaper "Svobodniye Novosti" published the sensational details of disappearance of Viktar Hancar, a chairperson of Central Election Committee, on September 16, 1999. The newspaper found a videotape with confessions of Jauhien Lycou, Viktar's driver, who now lives outside the country. Jauhien Lycou said the following: "Recently Viktar and me often noticed, that we were watched. (...) The day Viktar disappeared they followed us all the way from the house to the sauna. I said that later to the interrogator and police. But they refused to incorporate that in the record. On that day, when we approached the sauna, I noticed a dark-colored BMW, model 7, on the rear side of the sauna. Fifteen minutes before Hancar and Krasouski went out, I had gone on an errand. Another car, which I didn't notice before, followed me till I reached the borders of the city. After it all happened, several witnesses of the capture contacted me. I live nearby the sauna, which Hancar and Krasouski visited that day, so the witnesses didn't spend much time looking for me. As I had guessed, the capture was conducted in 2 cars. One of the cars blocked Krasouski's jeep from the front, and another one – from the rear. Some people jumped out of both cars, broke the windows of the jeep and dragged Hancar and Krasouski out. They were thrown into different cars. These people tried to start the jeep engine, but they didn't manage to. (...) it's more likely, that the jeep was towed away later. After the capture they actively started to put pressure on me. Some people in masks would suddenly break into my house and take me to the City Department of Internal Affairs, with no notice paper and no explanations whatsoever. The interrogators didn't want to find Hancar and Krasouski, they just wanted to find out, how much I knew. I was released after they tried to make me say that Hancar had run away. When I was released... some strange people started coming to "visit" me...in fact, it became dangerous for me to live at home."



On April 26, on the last session on the case of the ex-prime minister Michail Cyhir, the prosecutor V.Zynhiel, demanded in his speech for the prosecution to punish him with 5 years of confinement in the more restrictive custody prison. The case hearing will be continued on May 2.

On April 26 Valery Shchukin (journalist, member of the Supreme Soviet of 13th Convocation) was called to Saviecki District Court to the judge Maryja Fiodarava as a respondent. Z. Chvajnickaja, the judge of Minsk City Zavadzki District Court, filed a suit him for the insult of her honor. The trial of this civil case has already started.

The authorities appointed *April 22,* the Easter Saturday for Catholics, to be the day of *subotnik* (compulsory unpaid work).



On April 24 Minsk City Court has started a trial on a criminal case, accusing Mikola Statkievic (chairperson of Belarusan Social Democratic Party "Narodnaja Hramada") and Valery Shchukin (journalist, member of the Supreme Soviet of 13th Convocation) on the Article #186.3 of the Criminal Code of Republic of Belarus (organization or active participation in mass actions, which grossly violate the public order). The accusation against Mikola Statkievic consists of 2 parts: the events of July 27, 1999 (Independence Day celebration) and October 17, 1999 ("March of Freedom-1"). The accusation against Shchukin is connected only with October events. On behalf of interested organizations, among which there are City Department of Internal Affairs of Minsk City Executive Committee, national hospital of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, state city mechanization company "Trest", and state planting company "Minskzielenbud", Minsk Prosecutor's Office filed civil claims to the Minsk City Court, in order to exact payment of 2395959 (new money) Belarusan rubles for the damage done by the demonstrators. This is about 25 thousand US dollars. **On the picture:** *V.SHCHUKIN and M.STATKIEVIC in the court room.*

5 days, 3 days, Warning...

The detained during the "Chernobyl Way-2000" are going through the trials in Minsk

On April 27 Saviecki District Court of Minsk city considered an administrative case of Lida resident Jury Kuzmicki, who had been detained after the end of the meeting. J. Kuzmicki was carrying a huge national white-red-white flag. The policemen demanded Jury to give the flag to them, then they knocked him off his feet and started beating him. J. Kuzmicki was brought to Saviecki DDIA. On April 27 judge Ruslan Kazadajeu determined the penalty – 5 days in jail.

On April 27 and 28 a 19-year-old Siarhiej Cierachau was tried in Saviecki District Court. S. Cierachau was detained on April 26 at 8 p.m. together with his 16-year-old cousin (who was later released because he was under age). The cousins were detained by the 3 people dressed in civil clothes. Although there were police witnesses in court. The witness S.Carniecki stated that S. Cierachau "was swearing and using foul language, abusing the president". S. Cierachau was found guilty of infringement the Article #156 of the Administrative Code (minor hooliganism) and was sentenced to 3 days in jail.

Zmicier Zuraucyk and Andrej Sacuta, detained on April 26 on Jakub Kolas square, were severely beaten in police cars on the way to Minsk Leninski district police department. The detained spent the whole night in the department. In the morning the department chief fined them with 10 minimal salaries each. After they were released, Z. Zuraucyk and A.Sacuta underwent medical examination in order to record the physical damage. The examination showed, that Z. Zuraucyk had a broken rib.

Informational Department of HRC "Viasna"

Silence Is Consent?

Ethnical and denominational enmity is exasperated under the auspices of City and Orthodox Church authorities.

On April 20, the City Court postponed the hearing of an action, brought by a number of Jews' organizations and private persons Jakov Hutman and Jakov Basin. They lodged a complaint against "Definition" of the Saviecki District Court judge M.Fiodarava, who closed the case of honor, dignity and reputation protection and compensation of the moral damage, done by the publication of anti-Semitic book "War Based on Laws of Meanness" (published by the Joint-Stock Company "Orthodox Initiative", 1999). The action had been brought against the Joint-Stock Company "Orthodox Initiative", Minsk color printing factory, P.Bahamolau, P.Parchimovic, and P.Sokalau.

The case hearing is postponed to May 11. The anti-Semitic content of the book can easily be proved by the 2 following quotations: "It is true, that only kosher food is sold and only kosher meals are served in the shops and restaurants of New York and its suburbs in order not to "impure" the Jew customers... the non-Jewish population of this city, which is several times bigger in number, has to defer to the will of minority and eat the food, eaten by their "masters" (page 52) . "The people, who practice the religion, which preaches villainy, dodgery, homicide, slaughter of the entire nations, — are criminals by definition. Moreover, that their criminality is blessed by their God. Jews cannot be equal to the Christian people"(page 131).

The bookstore "Orthodox book", which is one of the departments of the Joint-Stock Company "Orthodox Initiative", continues to sell books with anti-Semitic and anti-Catholic content. In particular, now the store is offering the books "About the Hebrew Fascism" by M.Mironau and "Roman Catholicism and Ecumenicity" by H. Alaksiejeu.

The first book doesn't include the name of the publisher. The sale of printed products with no publication information is illegal. Here are several quotations from the book "About the Hebrew Fascism" by M.Mironau:

"Russia suffers not because the Jews left, Russia suffers from the Jews, who didn't leave. Russia suffers, because not all the Jews left" (page 9).

"When one nation sucks the blood out of another nation, feeding on the agony and suffering of another people – this is called fascism. When Russian people are getting poorer, starving and dying, and Jews are using that in order to prosper – this is called Jewish fascism" (pages 14-15).

By the way, the author doesn't hide, but, vice versa, tries to boast about the position he had – he is an ex-chairperson of Russian Federation Publishing Committee.

The second book "Roman Catholicism and Ecumenicity" by H. Alaksiejeu directed its anger towards Catholicism. One can learn nothing about the author of the book, but the foreword contains "gratitude to the priest Maksim Kazlou, assistant professor of Moscow Spiritual Academy, who has attentively read the manuscript and made a series of important remarks as to the content of the book". The whole idea of the book is contained in one sentence, which is outlined by the bold font in the text:

"Roman Catholicism is an anti-Christian religion, which is controlled by Satan and fights against God (the Holy Trinity and Christ), as well as His Revelation (the New Testament), which is vitally important for creating one universal religion and one universal church" (page 21).

The literature of such kind, which is sold under the auspices of the Orthodox Church and is evidently supported by those, who have the authority in the country, promotes ethnical and religious confrontation. It will lead to the tragic consequences in Belarus, as well as in other countries, Russia, first of all.

The viewpoint of the state of Israel is very surprising. Israel does not only accept Belarusan high-ranking officials to the country, but also signs intergovernmental agreements with Belarus.

One can also be surprised by the absence of reaction towards the increasing tension in ethnic and denominational relations in Belarus in the draft resolution #304 of the House of Representatives of the US Congress, adopted by the Foreign Affairs Committee. The governments of European countries, which demonstrated their sharp reaction towards the recent events in Austria, are also silent.

The events are reminicent of 1930', when the world was silently observing the strengthening of Hitler and waiting until the World War II started.

Informational Department of HRC "Viasna"

Trials And Judgements

The trials of the citizens, detained on March 25, the Freedom Day, continue.

On April 19 Ales Kapucki, a resident of Maladecna, was tried in Minsk Saviecki District Court. A. Kapucki was detained on March 25, on Varvaseni street, 8 (the office of Belarusan Popular Front "Adradzennie"). The policemen Alaksandar Ramanouski and Valancin Symanski, who was a witness against him in court, had falsely indicated in their original reports, that Kapucki was detained on Jakub Kolas square. The time of detention, noted in their reports, was also untrue. The report of Symanski was written in several different handwritings. During the trial Symanski explained that his handwriting is not stable and depends on the way "the paper is laid". Besides that, A.Symanski said that he composed the report after 5 p.m., though the report has to be written within 3 hours of being detained, and Ales Kapucki was detained at 11.30 a.m. Despite all these circumstances, the judge Ludmila Sievascjan warned Ales Kapucki.

On April 28, under-aged S.Karascanka was called to the Partyzanski District Juvenile Committee. He was detained on March 25 near the "Stalicny" supermarket, which is located close to the Jakub Kolas square, where an unauthorized opposition event "freedom Day-2000" was taking place. On that day S.Karascanka, together with his friend, was going to go shopping to the Central Department Store, but, together with the other people, was detained by policemen. The teenager was brought to Saviecki DDIA, where a protocol of him violating Article #167.1 of Code of Administrative Infringements was composed. The detention report was signed by A.Ramanouski, who is infamous for giving false evidence during the trials.

The Juvenile Committee reminded Karascanka, that it is the second time he's been detained on the Article #167.1 of CAI. Having listened to the explanations of S.Karascanka about his detention and taken into account the fact, that he doesn't have a stable income, the Committee reprimanded the teenager.

On April 26 Babrujsk Leninski District Court, chaired by the judge Halina Sievascjancyk, warned Viacaslau Svizunou, director of the regional Babrujsk Informational Legal Center. Svizunou was found guilty for the organization of "Freedom Day" celebration on Victory square, which was not permitted by the city authorities. V.Svizunou did not admit his guilt and stated: "If the authorities permit us to organize something from time to time, they send us to the very outskirts of the city, to the "Fandok" stadium, which is situated out of the public transport routs. However acts of civil disobedience, such as the Chain of Freedom, the Act of Love, Freedom Day, will continue until the local authorities permit us to conduct all of our events on Victory square". The trials of the Babrujsk Freedom Day participants are on going.

(continued from issue 6/7)

PRISONERS' PARADISE?

Swedish Investigative Detention Center, as any other place of imprisonment, has its own regime. The prisoners live in single cells. They have a legal right to meet with other people, to study, to walk. However "due to the technical reasons of investigation" the prosecutor can significantly limit the relations of a person under investigation. Meetings, telephone calls and letters outside the prison may be forbidden for such a person.

I will not say much about the meetings – meeting their families, friends and relatives is allowed "not more than once a week". No more, because there is not enough room for all those, who want to have a meeting. The prisoners can contact each other during the entire daytime, their cells are locked only after dinner. If the relations of a prisoner were limited on the account of investigation, he can stay in the cell or go to a special room in order to play chess or talk with another prisoner, who is not involved in the case.

The prisoners here are allowed to write letters, which is impossible in our "valadarkas" (investigative detention centers). Of course, they are checked by the prison guard. However, the guard is not checking the content, as they do it here in Belarus, but looks for drugs. This is a really big problem in Sweden. Mister Landebrink could not understand why one would need to also read the prisoner's letters. I tried to give him a hint: "on the account of investigation"...— "But the Prosecutor permitted correspondence to him!" – reminds me of the deputy chief of the Isolator. That means, that the investigation is going OK. I start to feel like a sadistically inclined dirty spy of the fascist regime.

The Swedish prisoners sometimes complain of the detention conditions. The most popular complaint is a too much isolation.

We were very much surprised by the prison telephones. The telephones are situated on every floor and can be moved from cell to cell. One can call to any place with the help of a telephone card. One does not even need to go outside the cell – each cell has a special window, which one can open and pick up the phone receiver. This is especially convenient, if a prisoner is limited in his relations. Generally, about 40% of persons under investigation are limited in their relations. Certainly, the relations with defense representatives cannot be limited: the phone calls to the lawyer are free of charge, at the expense of the state.

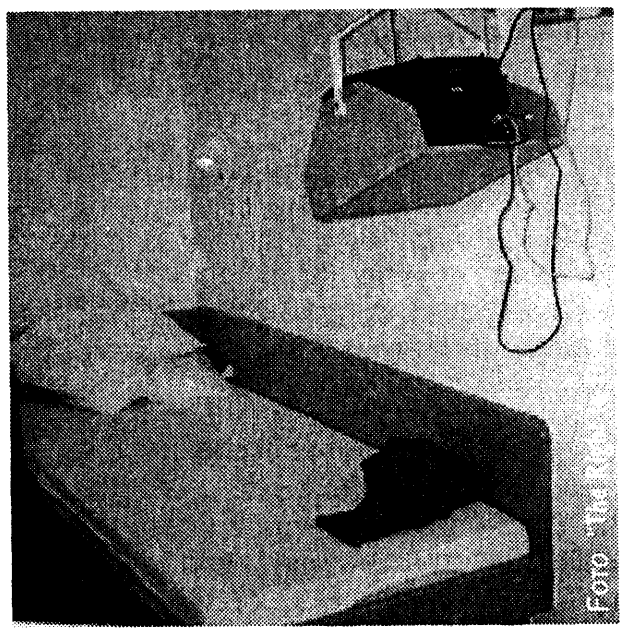
Parcels from outside the prison are not limited in weight and number, though there is a list of forbidden items. For instance, it is forbidden to send wine, flowers in a pot (drugs or something else might be hidden there) and tobacco. Tobacco is not only on the list because the Swedes smoke a lot less than we do. Cigarettes, as well as fruits, vegetables, sweets, postage stamps can be bought in the prison shop.

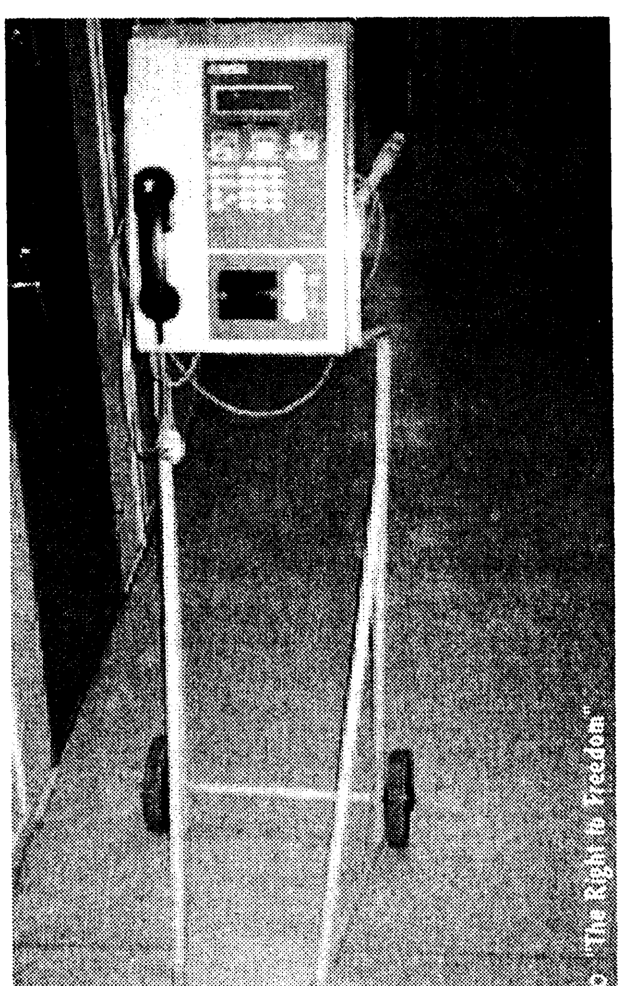
What kind of information about the current events can a prisoner learn from the local Mass Media? As I understood from the conversations with prisoners, the same, as the people from the other side of the bars. One doesn't need to subscribe for a newspaper, because all the morning newspapers are available free of charge (the evening press, however, fails to be delivered in time). TV (5 Swedish channels) may be watched all day and night long. Firstly, there are small TV-sets in each cell, secondly, the electricity is not turned off even during the night time! Sweden is not Belarus, where a sick person, whose guilt is not yet proved by the court, may not even make a cup of tea for himself in the evening.

However, the right for information is limited sometimes even for Swedish prisoners. There were such cases, as Mr. Landebrink says, that certain issues of some newspapers were not delivered to the prison, even the TV was switched off. What was wrong? Swedish Mass Media are sometimes featuring broad and detailed descriptions of some big criminal cases. The prison administration considers such information to be unnecessary and even dangerous for the prisoners. That makes sense, perhaps.

But reading books in Stockholm Investigative Detention Center is a thing one can appreciate. Books can be ordered in a prison library (it contains about 50 thousand books in 30 languages). The library assistants put the books on special trays and bring them to the prisoners. If the book cannot be found in a prison library, it is ordered from the city library.

We've been told that there are 10 special places for the sick prisoners or, as our guide said, for the prisoners, who "need a special care". He meant care, and not supervision. The policemen and guards here don't like the word "supervision". The sick people are not sent to the prison, but to a regular city hospital. With a special guard, if necessary. But of course, there is no problem to deliver medicine to a prisoner. One can clearly see, that state authorities care about the health of every citizen of their country, even if he got mixed up in his life and in the Criminal Code.





It is illegal to punish the prisoners by deprivating them of the right to walk. And we saw the area, allocated for walks...

When children tell you that Sweden is a country of Carlson, who lives on the roof, you can tell them the truth: the roof is also "populated" by...prisoners. I guess, there is a very big difference in what one can see while breathing fresh air: four walls and a piece of the sky above one's head – or a fine panorama of the beautiful ancient city just behind the railings? On the side of the railings there is a guard cabin with the intercommunication system. The same cabin is also situated in the sports hall. This is very unusual for us, the people in Belarus, but this is true: a Swedish prisoner can play tennis or volleyball, practice other sports. Of course, if he is not significantly limited in regime and relations. Most of the temporary "population" of the Investigative prison doesn't have those limitations.

Certainly, many prisoners are fond of making handicrafts: pens, caskets, pictures on clothes. The prison administration encourages prisoner's creativity. In the women's part of prison we saw women working on sewing machines, knitting (there is a wide choice of materials and threads in the prison store). The prison administration even organizes exhibitions of handicrafts, made by their temporary "guests". Cooking, for example, baking different pies, is also encouraged by the administration. There is a special kitchen with the stove and other equipment for these purposes, the foodstuffs can be bought in a prison store or received from outside.

Taciana SNITKO

(to be continued)

(continued from issue 7)

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Address: 220013, Minsk, p/b 49. E-mail:viasna@spring96.org www. spring96.org

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